

Good afternoon everyone! My name is Joanne O' Riordan and firstly I'd like to thank all of those at the United Nations and the people from the International Telecommunication Union for this amazing and unique opportunity to speak here in front of you today. Being invited to New York the week of my 16th Birthday is simply unbelievable.

As you can see I was born without my limbs but my motto in life is, No Limbs No Limits. The disability I have is known as Total Amelia and it is one of the rarest conditions known to us. I believe there are only seven people in the world living with this physical form and furthermore there is no medical explanation as to why I was born this way.

However, my family and I have never allowed it to hold me back.

From an early age I have always relied on the use of technology to help advance my abilities. Be this in moving or communicating I developed an understanding of what I could achieve with technology from a young age.

I use technology in all aspects of my life, be it at home, in school or through the wider medium of interacting with others. My parents have told me that when I was one I first began to explore the use of technology with our old computer.

I figured out how to use this software by simply moving my 'hand' and chin at a faster speed. Today I can type 36 words a minute and for someone with no limbs, I think that's an incredible achievement in itself.

The computer allowed me to play and follow certain games, which in turn helped me to learn my ABC's, Math and small words such as Cat and Dog. Needless to say, I'm a fiercely independent person but when I was born the technology that was there then was not as advanced as the technology we have now.

All my young life I've struggled and overcome barriers. I've surprised doctors, strangers, friends and even my own family by what I have achieved.

I must admit I'm always finding new ways or methods that would allow me to be the same as any other person. There is no such thing as 'normal' in my vocabulary.

When I started school I, like all the other children, used my hand to write. I did this by putting my pen in between my shoulder and chin and as you can imagine this was an enormous challenge for me but I overcame the obstacle.

I have always been breaking down barriers and overcoming obstacles. I do not look at the word Impossible and see it as Impossible. I look at that word and my life and say I'm Possible! Technology has made me even more determined to achieve a better standard and quality of life. I always think, if I can do this now, what would I achieve in the future?

Technology as we know is ever advancing and my question was soon answered when, at the age of seven, I started to develop a spinal condition known as scoliosis. This is a curvature of the spine. Unfortunately, this meant that I was not able to continue to

write as I did and I had to find a new way of learning and developing my educational potential.

I'm very lucky that I have the support of my family, as they have never allowed anyone to hold me back. They have done everything in their power to ensure that I would not lose out on my education and technology was key in helping me.

A system was set up which allows my schoolbooks to be put on to CD. This in turn enables me to do all my work through a computer. Nobody in Ireland has availed of this technology and I was extremely lucky to have a woman by the name of Christine O' Mahony helping me to make the process much easier. It took months to get the format right but when she did my life ultimately changed.

I now discovered that with one flick of my hand I was able to do all the things my other friends were doing with their fingers. I was able to be as good as them if not better. My quality of life has changed dramatically since I started using technology and only the other day I told my mother that technology is the limb I never had.

I can use my mobile phone, send texts, tweets, update my Facebook, play my PlayStation, Nintendo DS, iPad, iPod, and laptop; without Microsoft, Adobe and Apple in my life I would not be doing and achieving my full potential. In fact I think my life would be quite different to what it is now.

Believe it or not I simply use my upper and bottom lip, chin, nose and hand to work most if not all these systems. Technology has opened up a world of possibilities, through which I have excelled in both my education and social environment around me.

It is fair to say that I have been given the opportunities to grow, learn and adapt my lifestyle in a way that helps me, but I also know there are children and adults out there all over the world who do not have the same chances in life as I do.

I'm asking the Girls in Technology who are here today and who are the leading women within their field to start doing what I do, in my life, 'Think outside the box'. Think of ways and means that you can make technology more accessible to those who really need it because let's face it, we all know women are better than men at most things so why not technology too?

It is my wish and it's my challenge to you and to others out there to build me a robot.

Yes, that's right a robot! It sounds almost insane but as a child and even today I've always wanted and would love to have a robot.

The main thing the robot would be doing is picking up the objects I drop such as a pen, knife, fork, and or my phone.

This robot would become my hands and legs. So for example, if I was in the sitting room and I needed something from the kitchen, I would love for that robot to get me what I needed.

I mean to be fair when you're lazy and sitting down most of you use a remote control because you're too lazy to get up and manually switch the TV over – and trust me that is lazy. So why can't I have a robot?

Call it crazy, call it insane, call it what you like – but the challenges I face everyday get bigger and far greater to overcome. I know I can overcome these challenges but I need your help. I can't rely on my parents, my brothers, sister and others all my life. Can I? Certainly not and I don't want to!

I want to live an independent life just like you. I don't want to live in the shadow of others because I want to make my own journey in life and I know if I'm given that chance I can and will succeed.

I know that there must be someone out there in the world who can do something like this to make life much easier. It would not just help me, but indeed others who are in similar situations. Life is about living and let's face it Ladies, technology is not just a way of life, it's a way of living! And just because I have no limbs does not mean I will be limited. And neither should you!

Thank you!